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Iraq war debate

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Here are excerpts of remarks made Wednesday on the House and Senate floor by Bay Area members:

-- Rep. Pete Stark, D-Fremont: "The bitter truth is I don't believe the president and his advisers.

"Let us not forget that our president - our commander in chief -- has no experience with, or knowledge of, war. In fact, he admits that he was at best ambivalent about the Vietnam War. He skirted his own military service and then failed to serve out his time in the National Guard.

"The president thinks that foreign territory is the other team's dugout and that Kashmir is a sweater." .

-- Sen. Barbara Boxer, Democrat: "By passing this, the president can go it alone. Some members say that this will strengthen the United Nations' role. But I think the opposite is true. This takes the heat off the U.N.

"I have asked many questions, but they have not been answered. How many of our military people, our men and women, will it take? What will the casualties be? How long will we have to be there after the war? What will the costs be?" .

-- Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-San Jose: "I cannot support the president's request that we authorize military force against Iraq. I make this very difficult decision for three important reasons: The United States is not acting in self- defense or from an imminent threat from Iraq, the United States should not be pursuing unilateral action without international support, and the president has not stated an exit strategy.

"With our own economy on the ropes, the president seems only to be focusing on Iraq. War with Iraq will not rebuild the economy of the United States. When the security of America is at stake, cost is no object. We will spend whatever is necessary in the defense of America. But when the effort is not self-defense, America will rightly ponder the inevitable costs of war." .

-- Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Atherton: "Not one of us carries a brief for Saddam Hussein. We know what he's done and how he rules. We know about his accumulation of chemical and biological weapons, and the other weapons that threaten his neighbors and us.

"Our answer today? Send a thousand 'troops' of weapons inspectors to Iraq. This time, they must have unrestricted access to everything and with deadlines to achieve disarmament. The world community will watch, and as we disarm him, we will loosen the noose he holds.

"We can be tough and principled today as we have been in the past. We can bring other nations with us and when we do, Saddam will know he cannot dodge or be deceitful any longer." .

-- Rep. Mike Honda, D-San Jose: "The president says he is willing to 'go it alone' against Iraq as a last resort, but there is no mechanism in this resolution to ensure that it is just that -- a last resort. Let one

thing be clear, a vote for this resolution is more than an 'authorization for use of force,' it is a 'declaration of war,' and I will oppose it.

"We must rid Saddam Hussein of any weapons of mass destruction. However, I urge the administration to continue to work with the U.N. to gain support for a tough resolution with accompanying multinational force, if necessary." .

-- Rep. Mike Thompson, D-St. Helena: "I have been in combat, and I'm not willing to vote to send another soldier to war without clear and convincing evidence that America or our allies are in immediate danger, and not without the backup and support of allied forces.

"The president delivered a good speech on Monday evening. I agree with him that Hussein is a ruthless dictator and that he's trying to build an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. However, he showed us no link between Iraq and 9/11, nor did he produce any evidence that even suggests that America or our allies are in immediate danger.

"If it is the decision of this Congress to go to war, I will support our troops 1,000 percent. However, I saw Baghdad, and I know fighting a war there will be ugly, and casualties may be high."

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